

PROFESSIONAL WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST PROFILE



As trained wildlife biologists, your goal is to help restore the park and its surrounding areas to a balanced, diverse ecosystem that includes a healthy deer herd. Some in your group work for the State Department of Natural Resources and their job is to help develop a deer management plan that conforms to state laws and scientific reason. Others are professional deer managers with experience in controlling deer populations. These members of your group would like the town to hire their professional management services.

- Your observations indicate the deer herd has grown to levels that are far above the area's carrying capacity. The herd has overbrowsed the habitat and deer are malnourished. Several plant and animal species are suffering population declines or even local extinction.
- You think the town should use the biological carrying capacity as its target deer population rather than a cultural carrying capacity that might allow for more deer.
- Although hunters help regulate deer populations in many parts of your state, you recognize the park and its surrounding areas are not suitable for routine hunting. Other removal techniques that may be more appropriate include using trained sharpshooters to cull deer with silenced rifles at night when no one is in the park or organizing regulated deer hunts using trained bow or gun hunters in restricted park areas when the park is closed.
- You are concerned that stress and associated deer mortality from any hands-on capture techniques (such as rocket nets, box traps, drop nets or tranquilizer dart guns), can run as high as 60 percent within 12 months of capture and relocation to an unfamiliar environment. Also, if the deer carry diseases such as Bovine Tuberculosis or Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) your state may prohibit any trap and transfer programs.

Consider these questions as you debate management proposals during your town meeting:

- What solutions offer a quick fix, and which offer long-term solutions that will help the ecosystem?
- What are the biological implications of the different recommended solutions and what are their chances of success?
- Which plans seem likely to get the most positive results at the lowest cost?
- What role can scientific experimentation play in the town's management plan? What can other towns learn from your town's experience?
- What are the pros and cons of using contraceptive treatments to try to control populations?
- How can Bovine Tuberculosis and CWD affect deer overpopulation and proposed solutions?

WEB RESEARCH SITES

- International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies—Report titled “Bears in the Backyard, Deer in the Driveway” (www.iafwa.org/bearsbackyardfacts.html)
- Quality Deer Management Association (www.QDMA.com)
- Deer contraception and population control articles (www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/options.html)
- Professional deer management team (www.whitebuffaloinc.org)